



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Tonopah Field Office

P.O. Box 911 (1553 South Main Street)

Tonopah, Nevada 89049

Phone: 775-482-7800

Fax: 775-482-7810

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html

In Reply Refer To:

LLNVB0200 (4700)

Dear Interested Public:

The Tonopah Field Office (TFO) is planning to gather approximately 150 wild horses from the Little Fish Lake Herd Management Area (HMA) beginning on or around February 8, 2015. Approximately 100 horses will be removed from the HMA and will be shipped to a holding facility in Ridgecrest, California. The remaining horses will be released back into the HMA after application of Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP-22) to the mares.

The gather and removal is in accordance with the Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B000-2012-0005-EA (Drought EA), dated June 22, 2012. The Drought EA, signed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) and Decision record is available on-line at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html. Then by following the link to the National NEPA Register Page and searching: "Nevada" – "NV-Tonopah FO" – "DNA" – "2015". Hard copies are available from the Tonopah Field Office.

The Battle Mountain District Drought Management EA was made available to the public for 30 day comment on April 13, 2012. The EA was also made available to the Nevada State Clearinghouse which made the notification letter and EA available for review by over 50 different local, county, state, and federal agencies from around the state. The EA was posted on the BMD website and NEPA Register. All comments were reviewed and considered in the preparation of the EA. The DNA for the EA was completed and signed December 31, 2014.

The proposed gather area is located northeast of Tonopah, Nevada in Nye County. The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the HMA is 39 and the 2014 estimated population is 200 wild horses based on direct count completed in March 2014. The HMA is typically managed in association with the US Forest Service Little Fish Lake Wild Horse Territory (WHT) which has an AML of 93, for a combined AML of 132 horses. These areas would usually be gathered together. Due to the increased potential for an emergency, sufficient time was not available to properly coordinate with the USFS to organize and implement a comprehensive management plan for the HMA and WHT. Once immediate issues have been resolved the TFO plans to coordinate with the USFS to better manage the area.

According to the US Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>), the HMA has experienced times of severe drought over the last 4 years. Due to overutilization during periods of drought, the HMA has experienced a decrease in forage availability.

Vegetation within the HMA is displaying various signs of drought stress. There is a significant lack of forage, available for wildlife and wild horses. Prompt action is needed to ensure that rangeland resources, including those providing critical habitat for Greater Sage-grouse are not further impacted and degraded during the drought. Previous drought conditions and continued vegetation overutilization by wild horses (cattle grazing has not occurred for over a year and the previous years consisted only of limited use such as trailing) are resulting in measurable resource damage within the Little Fish Lake HMA. Continued overgrazing by wild horses will hamper or prevent the recovery of these areas. Further, the action is needed to protect rangeland resources from deterioration associated with an overpopulation of wild horses, and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on the public lands consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b) (2) of the 1971 *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act* (WFRHBA).

If you have any questions, or are interested in viewing the gather, please contact Austin Brewer, Tonopah Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (775) 482-7832.

Sincerely,

/s/ Timothy Coward
Timothy Coward
Field Manager,
Tonopah Field Office